

FIRST-YEAR WRITING II

“Writing the Visual”

WRS 106
Merrick Building 204
Mon., Wed., Fri. 1:25–2:15 pm
Spring 2025
adamabraham.info

Dr. Adam Abraham
Office: Ferre Building 121
Hours: Mon., Wed. 3:30–4:30 pm
or by appointment
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“Words, English words, are full of echoes, of memories, of associations—naturally. They have been out and about, on people’s lips, in their houses, in the streets, in the fields, for so many centuries.”

—Virginia Woolf

“I think the whole glory of writing lies in the fact that it forces us out of ourselves and into the lives of others.”

—Sherwood Anderson

“Without art, the crudeness of reality would make the world unbearable.”

—George Bernard Shaw

“A conclusion is the place where you got tired of thinking.”

—Martin H. Fischer

The university says:

WRS 106 is the second course in the first-year study and builds on the work of WRS 105. The course offers advanced approaches to multidisciplinary written and multimodal communication using secondary sources. Students will engage with the theme and subject from historical, social, psychological, political, and literary perspectives. This may include fiction and nonfiction, prose and poetry, and non-print sources such as film or art. Students carry out in-depth research, evaluate competing sources against each other, form complex arguments, and converse with multiple citations and varying academic genres. Students will continue to refine their strategies of writing analytically based on revisions and feedback from instructor and classmates.

REQUIRED READING:

Silverman, Jonathan, and Dean Rader. *The World Is a Text: Writing about Visual and Popular Culture*. Updated Compact Edition. Peterborough, Ontario: Broadview, 2018.

New and/or used copies can be purchased or rented at the Campus Store. All other readings will be made available online.

Each student will also be required to purchase a Roaring Spring one-subject notebook (available at the Campus Store) for in-class writing exercises.

COURSE AIMS:

Rather than teach “how to write” (which may or may not be possible), the course will ask you to *study, learn, and think about* writing. These activities will occur in three forms:

WRITING as object
 practice
 reflection

Writing as object refers to the reading assignments that will comprise some of your homework. In all cases, read the texts carefully and critically. Be prepared to discuss in class. Writing as practice is, of course, the central aim of First-Year Writing II. You will develop strategies for planning, drafting, revising, and editing your work. Finally, writing as reflection asks that you comment on the work that you have completed and demonstrate awareness of the writing process.

During the semester, you will read closely and critically; write analyses supported by textual evidence; research and synthesize secondary sources; demonstrate proficiency in grammar, punctuation, and academic citation.

MAJOR ASSIGNMENTS:

Most of the assignments this semester will contribute toward one of three major essays:

Essay no. 1: CLOSE READING OF AN OBJECT

- Rough draft
- Final draft

Essay no. 2: ANALYSIS THROUGH A LENS

- Rough draft
- First draft
- Final draft

Essay no. 3: RESEARCH

- Proposal
- Literature review
- First draft
- Final draft with reflection

ASSESSMENT:

- I. Attendance: 10 points
- II. Preparation and participation: 10 points
- III. Unannounced quizzes: 10 points
- IV. Essay no 1: 10 points
- V. Group presentation: 10 points
- VI. Essay no. 2: 10 points
- VII. Essay no. 3: 40 points

TOTAL = 100 points

EXPECTATIONS:

Attendance

Marshall Brickman once told a reporter that 80 percent of success is showing up. In this course, attendance will count for 10 percent of your final grade. But attendance means more than just showing up. You must be fully *present*: awake, alert, attentive, engaged. Each student is permitted up to five *unexcused* absences. It's five for free, no questions asked. However, if you miss six classes, you will earn zero points for attendance. If you miss more, then you are at risk of receiving a failing grade. Any student who misses ten classes will probably fail. An *excused* absence is a university-sponsored event, a religious holiday, or a medical illness (not a routine doctor's visit). In these cases only, email the instructor with relevant documentation.

Preparation

One goal of this course is to get students to read and think critically. You should read each assigned text in its entirety before the class session listed. Be an *active* reader: underline words, scribble in the margins, write down questions, and make note of passages that you want to discuss.

Participation

We learn by articulating ideas and refining those ideas in conversation with others. Try to be a lively participant in each class discussion. Raise points, ask questions. Listen carefully and respectfully to what others are saying. It is okay to disagree with one another: disagreement does not mean disrespect. An important part this course will be a series of peer-review workshops in which you will exchange ideas with a fellow student. Your writing will be evaluated by the other student, and you will offer your insights in return.

Electronic Devices

Because paying attention is one of the goals of this course, I ask that all phones and electronic devices are turned off and placed out of sight. Students texting in class will be marked absent for that class meeting. If there is a genuine life crisis, please pretend that it is 1977 and that you have to go outside to use a payphone *before* texting or making that urgent call.

Quizzes

In order to assess that you are studying the assigned material and listening in class, there will be four unannounced quizzes over the semester. These will be rather easy if you have completed the assignments. I will drop the lowest score. Because the element of surprise is essential, you will *not* be able make up these quizzes under any circumstances.

In-Class Writing

Writing requires practice. To that end, there will be several in-class writing exercises. You will be asked to write these with a pen or pencil, in your Roaring Spring one-subject notebook (or its paper equivalent). *Do not* write these assignments in electronic form. From time to time, I may collect the pages. They will not be evaluated, scored, or annotated in any fashion.

Essay Submission

Students should be prepared to submit writing assignments electronically or in hard copy, as required. Rough drafts and the literature review will need to be printed in *hard copy* for the process of in-class peer review. Handwritten essays are difficult to read. Please type all your drafts. Make plans to access a printer this semester.

Late Work

Because the assignments are scaffolded—one building toward another—late submission for one assignment may negatively impact the next. Rough drafts and first drafts will be accepted late *at the discretion of the instructor*. Ten percent of available points will be deducted for each draft that is late. Any work submitted more than one week after the

deadline may be marked without the benefit of comments and corrections. Final drafts will be accepted until the end of the semester. Note that any work submitted after 2 May will receive a score of zero.

Conferences

During two weeks, classes will be canceled so that we can hold one-on-one instructor-student conferences. These sessions will be held via Zoom. Each student will arrange a fifteen-minute meeting. The scheduled meeting time becomes the deadline for that draft. Any student who misses his or her session without sufficient notice will lose points on that essay.

Learning Needs

You are welcome to schedule a one-on-one meeting to discuss anything related to the course. If you require accommodation for a diagnosed disability, please notify me privately at the beginning of the semester.

Generative AI

Although this is a writing course, our primary goal is *thinking*. Therefore, do not use ChatGPT or similar tools to generate ideas, titles, or other outputs. For the most part, you will be graded on your process—not the final product. Do not rob yourself of the experience of creating something new and letting your ideas flow.

Academic Integrity

It is the assumption that the work you present in this course will be your own. If you incorporate the words or ideas of any other source, then you must cite that person, text, or mode of AI. If you do not know how to cite sources, read chapter 14 of *The Chicago Manual of Style* or ask me for guidance. If you submit someone else's work as your own, you may be in violation of the Undergraduate Honor Code.

SCHEDULE:

Reading assignments must be completed by the start of the class period mentioned. Items marked with an infinity sign (∞) will be found on the website adamabraham.info.

JANUARY

Mon. 13 Introduction to the Course

Wed. 15 Writing Sentences

- Maddalena article ∞
- Cohn article ∞

Fri. 17 Writing Sentences (continued)

[JANUARY cont'd]

Mon. 20 NO CLASS (Martin Luther King, Jr.'s Birthday Observed)

Wed. 22 Writing Paragraphs

- Paragraphs (good) ∞

Fri. 24 • Paragraphs (bad) ∞

ESSAY NO. 1

Mon. 27 Introduction to Essay no. 1: Close Reading

- Silverman and Rader, *World Is a Text*, chapter 1

Wed. 29 Reading Visual Culture

- Berger, *Ways of Seeing*, chapters 1, 4, and 5 ∞

Fri. 31 • Berger, *Ways of Seeing*, chapters 6–7 ∞

FEBRUARY

Mon. 3 Drafting in Class

- Bring Essay no. 1 work-in-progress
- Silverman and Rader, *World Is a Text*, chapter 2

Wed. 5 Peer Review

- **ESSAY NO. 1** ROUGH DRAFT in hard copy

Fri. 7 NO CLASS

- **ESSAY NO. 1** FINAL DRAFT via email by 4:30 pm

ESSAY NO. 2

Mon. 10 Introduction to Essay no. 2: Analysis

- Silverman and Rader, *World Is a Text*, chapter 3

Wed. 12 The Documentary

- SCREEN: *High School* (1968) Frederick Wiseman ∞

Fri. 14 Group decision-making and prep time

- SCREEN: *Harlan County U.S.A.* (1976) Barbara Kopple ∞
- SCREEN: *The Thin Blue Line* (1988) Errol Morris ∞

[FEBRUARY cont'd]

Mon. 17 Group prep time

- Silverman and Rader, *World Is a Text*, chapters 4–5

Wed. 19 Presentations

•• **GROUP PRESENTATIONS**

Fri. 21 Critical Lenses

- Barthes, “The Death of the Author” ∞

Mon. 24 Drafting in Class

- Bring Essay no. 2 work-in-progress

Wed. 26 Peer Review

- **ESSAY No. 2** ROUGH DRAFT in hard copy

Fri. 28 NO CLASS (Scheduled conferences)

MARCH

Mon. 3 NO CLASS (Scheduled conferences)

Wed. 5 NO CLASS (Scheduled conferences)

Fri. 7 NO CLASS

- **ESSAY NO. 2** FINAL DRAFT via email by 4:30 pm

Mon. 10 NO CLASS (Spring Break)

Wed. 12 NO CLASS (Spring Break)

Fri. 14 NO CLASS (Spring Break)

ESSAY NO. 3

Mon. 17 NO CLASS

Wed. 19 Introduction to Essay no. 3: Research

- Silverman and Rader, *World Is a Text*, chapter 6

Fri. 21 Brainstorming & Planning

- choose a serialized television show to write about

Mon. 24 Serialized TV

- Silverman and Rader, *World Is a Text*, chapter 7

Wed. 26 Writing about Media

Fri. 28 NO CLASS

- **ESSAY NO. 3** PROPOSAL via email by 4:30 pm

[MARCH cont'd]

Mon. 31 Cineliteracy

- Silverman and Rader, *World Is a Text*, chapter 8

APRIL

Wed. 2 The History of Plagiarism

Fri. 4 Online Databases

Mon. 7 Library Day (NOTE: Meet in Richter Library, take stairs or escalator to the third floor, go to the Digital Scholars' Lab, room 344)

- Silverman and Rader, *World Is a Text*, chapter 9

Wed. 9 Citing Sources

Fri. 11 NO CLASS

Mon. 14 Drafting in Class

- Bring Essay no. 3 literature review work-in-progress
- Silverman and Rader, *World Is a Text*, chapter 19

Wed. 16 Peer Review

- **ESSAY NO. 3** LITERATURE REVIEW in hard copy

Fri. 18 The Semester in Retrospect

Mon. 21 NO CLASS (Scheduled conferences)

Wed. 23 NO CLASS (Scheduled conferences)

Fri. 25 NO CLASS (Scheduled conferences)

Mon. 28 Reflecting on Writing

- Edmundson, "Who Are You and What Are You Doing Here" ∞

••• **ESSAY NO. 3** FINAL DRAFT via email

Friday 2 May

By 4:30 pm

UNIVERSITY BOILERPLATE:

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

The University of Miami community recognizes integrity as a core institutional value. The Undergraduate Honor Code is based upon the Academic Integrity Policy which was approved by the Faculty Senate, the President of the University, and the Board of Trustees in 2019. To learn more and to access the honor code, visit the Student Affairs website: <https://doso.studentaffairs.miami.edu/honor-council/honor-code/index.html>.

DISABILITY SERVICES

The Office of Disability Services (ODS) is the primary university office responsible for the coordination of auxiliary aids and services for students with disabilities. Please visit the website: <https://camnercenter.miami.edu>,

GRIEVANCES

If at any point in the semester you have questions or concerns about your grade or your standing in class, please speak to the instructor. However, according to the guidelines set by FERPA, the instructor cannot discuss grades via email, phone, or with parents or other parties. If you want to discuss grades or related concerns, please do so during office hours or schedule an appointment.

INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY

Pursuant to the University's Policy on Inventions, Intellectual Property, and Technology Transfer, the instructor is the copyright owner of the courseware, including course syllabi, assignments, assessments, and/or other materials that are first created and made available to students as part of the educational curriculum at the University. Students are expressly prohibited from recording any part of this course. Students are expressly prohibited from entering any course materials into data harvesters, such as ChatGPT or other AI programs.

STUDENT LEARNING OBJECTIVES

It is expected that First-Year Writing Students will be able to demonstrate effective written communication skills in relation to specific rhetorical tasks; construct original, well-reasoned arguments using a range of materials; integrate and synthesize appropriate and relevant primary and secondary sources in their writing.

WRITING CENTER

The Writing Center at the University of Miami strives to help all members of the university community learn more about writing and become better writers. Their professional and friendly tutors work with writers in one-to-one consultations on all stages of the writing process, from note-taking and pre-writing to revision strategies and proofreading techniques. The Writing Center works to teach students ways to improve their writing, but tutors will not proofread or edit papers or talk with you about grades. To make an appointment, call (305) 284-2956 or visit the Writing Center's website: <https://writingstudies.as.miami.edu/writing-center/index.html>.